

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SANA 02303 160614Z
ACTION SS-25

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P 151415Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4728
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

S E C R E T SANA 2303

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
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PAGE 02 SANA 02303 160614Z

TAGS: PORG
SUBJECT: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS: REPRESENTATIONS ON CUBA'S ROLE
IN THE HORN

REF: STATE 107365

1. IN CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER ABDALLAH AL-ASNAJ TODAY,

MAY 15, I ASKED IF YEMEN HAD ANY INTENTION OF MAKING REPRESENTATIONS EITHER IN UN OR NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT CONCERNING ROLE OF CUBANS IN HORN AND REAST OF AFRICA.

2. ASNAJ REPLIED THAT HE HAD ALREADY CALLED IN SOMALI AND SUDANESE AMBASSADORS IN SANA TO TELL THEM THAT HE FELT IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO OBJECT TO MEETING OF THE NAM IN HAVANA, WHICH COULD HARDLY CALL ITSELF A MEMBER OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT WHEN IT HAD SERVED SOVIET PURPOSES SO SLAVISHLY IN MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA. ASNAJ WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE FELT YEMENIA STATEMENTS SHOULD NOT MERELY CALL VAGUELY FOR THE END OF FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN AFFAIRS IN THE HORN, BUT SHOULD SPECIFICALLY SINGLE OUT FOR CONDEMNATION THE CUBAN ROLE.

3. TO FOCUS ASNAJ'S CONCERNS I NOTED STATEMENT OF DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN ON MAY 13 CONCERNING FOREIGN COMMUNIST PERSONNEL IN SOUTH YEMEN AND ASKED HIM WHETHER HE THOUGH "OVER A THOUSAND" WAS A GOOD ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF CUBANS, SOVIETS, EAST GERMANS AND OTHERS. ASNAJ SHOOK HIS HEAD AND AFTER SOME EXPRESSIONS OF UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE EXACT NUMBERS HE SAID THAT HE WOULD USE THE FIGURE OF "AT LEAST TWO THOUSAND" FOR CUBANS ALONE. HE SAID THAT ROWS OF APARTMENTS AT AL-MANSOURA CAMP IN SHAYK OTHMAN HAD
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 SANA 02303 160614Z

RECENTLY BEEN CLEARED TO ACCOMMODATE CUBANS. THE CAMP HAD "ALREADY BECOME A CUBAN CITY." HE SAID HE DIDN'T THINK THAT CUBAN UNITS WERE IN ADVANCED POSITIONS LIKE AL-ABR, OPPOSING SAUDI FORMATIONS IN SHARURA, BUT CERTAINLY CUBANS SERVED AS UNIT COMMANDERS THERE AS WELL AS IN 6TH PROVINCE OPPOSITE DHOFAR. HE DID NOT SUGGEST HOW MANY CUBAN MILITARY PERSONNEL WERE IN SOUTH YEMEN BUT WAS FIRM IN SAYING THAT MOST OF THE TWO THOUSAND WERE MILITARY.

4. NOTING THE RECENT AND RAPID BUILDUP IN PDRY OF CUBAN MILITARY HE SAID, A BID MORDANTLY, "APPARENTLY THEY AREN'T USING ALL OF THEM IN ZAIRE."

COMMENT: YAR PRESIDENT AL-GHASHMI ESTIMATED TWO WEEKS AGO THAT THERE WERE "ONE THOUSAND" CUBAN MILITARY IN PDRY AND, FROM WHAT WE KNOW, FIGURE OF ONE THOUSAND FOR ALL FOREIGN COMMUNIST PERSONNEL IN SOUTH YEMEN, BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN, IS VERY CONSERVATIVE. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE YEMENI PERCEPTION OF THREAT FROM ADEN, I AM SKEPTICAL THAT THEY WILL REALLY SAY MUCH IN PUBLIC OR ACT FORCEFULLY AGAINST

CUBAN ROLE IN NAM OR ANY OTHER FORUM. THEY
ARE AFRAID OF SOVIETS--OF "YEMEN BECOMING ANOTHER
AFGHANISTAN," AS ASNAJ SAID SEVERAL TIMES TODAY.
CORRESPONDINGLY, THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT SAUDIS OR US
WOULD PROVIDE ANY HELP IN THE CLUTCH. ASNAJ MADE THIS
POINT SEVERAL STIME TODAY TOO. DESPITE HESITATIONS
AND AMBIVALENCE WHICH WE THINK WILL INEVITABLY MARK
PUBLIC POSITION OF YAR, THERE IS OPENING HERE FOR
FUTHER REPRESENTATIONS ON CUBAN'S ROLE IN THE HORN
AND, IF DEPARTMENT WISHES, I CAN FOLLOW UP WITH
WELL-INFORMED, WORKING LEVEL OFFICIALS LIKE IBRAHIM
AL-KIBSI (SEE SANA 2154).
RANSOM

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NNN

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